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House Resources Committee Oversight Hearing on the
Report of the Guam War Claims Review Commission
July 21, 2004

First of all, I would like to thank Chairman Pombo and Ranking Member Rahall for holding this oversight hearing today to review the report of the Guam War Claims Review Commission. It is most fitting that we meet today, July 21st, the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Guam, and that we accept the Review Commission's report. It is also significant that the Review Commission began its work on Guam on December 8, 2003, the day marking the attack and invasion of Guam by forces of Imperial Japan. From invasion to Liberation, the task of Guam War Claims Review Commission has followed the tragic history of the occupation of Guam and its work is a testament to the loyalty of the people of Guam to the United States during a very brutal period.

I want to welcome Lieutenant Governor Kaleo Moylan who has traveled from Guam as Governor Camacho's representative to present the testimony of the Government of Guam. I welcome Chairman Tamargo and former Chief Justice Benjamin J. Cruz of the Review Commission, Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen, and my good friend former Congressman Ben Blaz, who is uniquely qualified to testify about the occupation of Guam and the issue before us today. Hafa adai to all of you.

I also wish to acknowledge today the work of my predecessors, former Congressmen Tony Won Pat, Ben Blaz and Robert Underwood, whose efforts formed the foundation for today's hearing. In particular, Mr. Underwood successfully passed the legislation that authorized the Review commission.

Mr. Chairman, the weight of history is upon us today. We will hear the conclusions of a review commission that the people of Guam endured heroically a brutal occupation only to be neglected in the aftermath of the war when amends were made to all other Americans for all other burdens of war. Our burden as an American community was exceptionally heavy. Our experience as an occupied land was especially harsh. Our historical injustice in being left out of key war claims legislation after the war is exceedingly bitter.

The Review Commission's report is compelling and unequivocal. The Commission concludes that there was a lack of parity in the Guam war claims program in comparison to programs afforded to other Americans. To remedy this injustice, the Commission recommends that the Administration and the Congress authorize a new program for Guam to address these disparities and to right a wrong. I endorse these recommendations. I will work to pass legislation that incorporates these recommendations and I will also try to address concerns that have been raised.

We have a daunting task to remedy this injustice. But I do not think it is the most daunting of challenges. I think today it is encouraging to recall the courage of the young Marines and soldiers who at this very hour on Guam sixty years ago would be awake in the night on the beaches of Asan and Agat bracing for enemy counter attacks that will come and hoping to survive till daybreak. It is inspiring to recall the faith of the Chamorros in the concentration camps of Manengon, Malojloj and other sites who could hear the American invasion and who huddled praying that they would not be slaughtered before the liberators could find them. It is therefore not the most daunting of challenges, but it may be among the most important tasks that this Committee can undertake.

I look forward to hearing from the Review Commission and from our Guam representatives. I would also like to enter into the record the several statements that we have received.